The Story Behind The Production of M-G-M's

PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE

COLOR BY TECHNICOLOR

FOREWORD

IN M-G-M's "Plymouth Adventure" moviegoers will view a film chronicle of one of history's most dramatic voyages — the *Mayflower's* Atlantic crossing from England to Cape Cod in 1620.

As members of a theater audience, people who see the picture will naturally tend to regard its stars as the creators of their entertainment.

This is a normal reaction to any feature film of merit, for actors are the indispensable link between the audience and the story the movie aims to tell. Success or failure of a picture can be measured in terms of the degree to which its viewers identify themselves with the motives and emotions of a Spencer Tracy, a Gene Tierney, a Van Johnson.

While it is watching a picture, the audience prefers, and is encouraged, to accept the illusion —to believe the actors are living the story spontaneously.

In the back of its mind the audience, of course, knows this is not true. Reflectively, it realizes the finished picture is a collaborative product; that the hero and heroine did not invent the plot, improvise the dialogue, design and decorate the houses they live in, or compose the songs they sing; that many other creative talents have been at work behind the scenes.

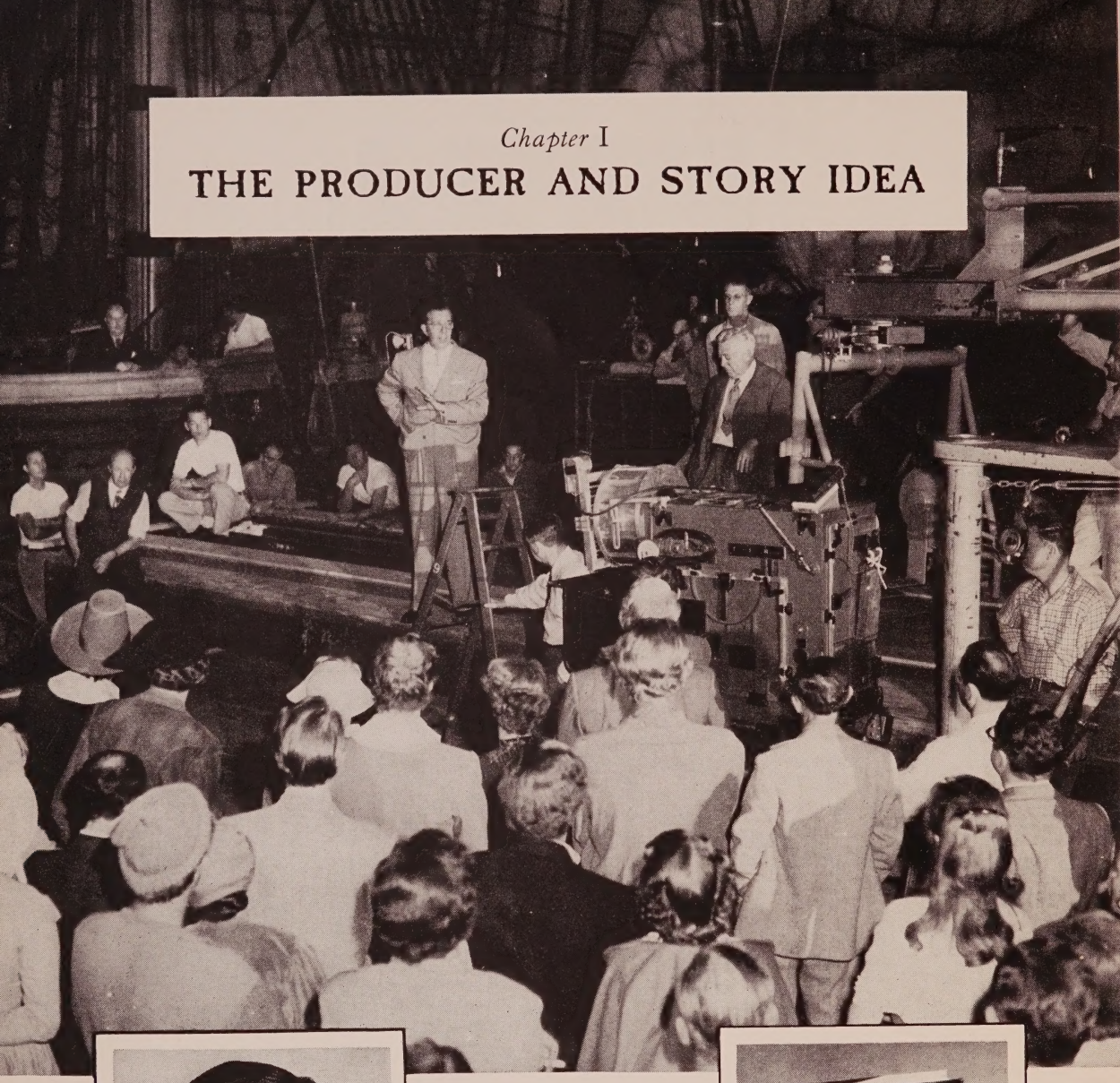
Collaboration of these talents, in the case of "Plymouth Adventure", involved the thoughtful planning and skilled workmanship of 276 different arts, professions, industries, sciences, crafts and vocations over a period of nearly three years. From the story and script departments to the film laboratory and cutting room, some 1,200 people employed at M-G-M Studios all made their own indispensable contributions to the picture.

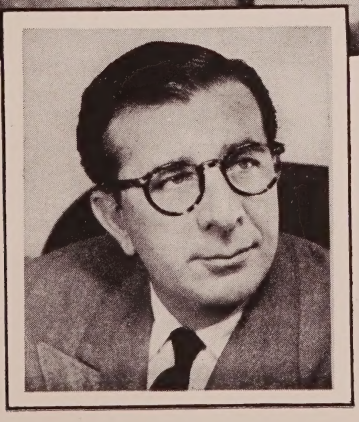
No one is more appreciative of the large, resourceful organization behind them than the stars themselves, nor more fully aware of the vital part played by their 1,200 backstage studio colleagues.

How they did it—how "Plymouth Adventure" came to the screen—is the subject of this story.

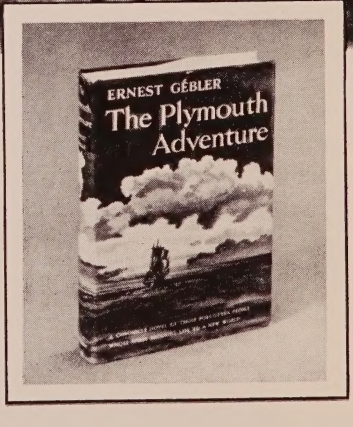
Chapter I

THE PRODUCER AND STORY IDEA





From the quayside, near the authentic reproduction of the historic Mayflower, Dore Schary, M-G-M head personally producing "Plymouth Adventure," makes an opening day speech to assembled cast and crew. At right of Schary, listens director Clarence Brown.



A DECISION to invest *X* millions of dollars in the making of a motion picture — any motion picture—is not one to be taken lightly.

Whenever the production head of a studio makes such a decision he must stand prepared to answer a simple yet pertinent question: Why?

"Because I believe it will be a good movie," is the pat reply. That is a truthful generality as far as it goes, but it leads to another fair question. Why does he think so?

The answer to that can never be pat. It is always complex, involving such factors as personal interests, judgment and experience, likes and dislikes, the executive producer's best guess on what will have future box-office appeal, and the industry's basic thirst for originality. At the core, in the production background of every movie, is enthusiasm for an idea. It may be self-generated or somebody else may have sold it to him, but in either case the studio head must buy it. An important picture—a "top budget picture" or "major production," in the trade phrases—comes into being when the key idea strikes fire and spreads through an entire studio.

This occurred with "Plymouth Adventure", the most ambitious and expensive picture on M-G-M's 1952 production schedule.

The idea behind "Plymouth Adventure" was challenging: to bring out an exciting, unwritten page in the early chapters of American history by telling a realistic story about the Pilgrims.

"There is a curious lap-dissolve we take in our minds when we think about the Pilgrims," as Dore Schary, vice-president in charge of production at the sprawling Culver City studios, expressed it. "They leave Holland and then England aboard a ship named the *Mayflower*, and three months later we see them coming ashore at Plymouth Rock to found a new land. But what happened on the trip? An Atlantic crossing in 1620, especially one finding more than a hundred men, women and children crowded aboard a 90-foot ship like the *Mayflower*, was one of the most adventurous and courageous voyages in history—and there's the focus of our picture."

Early in 1950, in the normal flow of printed material which pours into M-G-M's story department, came the advance galley proofs of a novel soon to be published by Doubleday & Co. It was "The Plymouth Adventure", by Ernest Gebler.

The first half of the book was a fictional fill-in of history's lap-dissolve. It related the Pilgrims' perilous ordeal at sea and the bitterness of their day-to-day feud with the *Mayflower's* master, Captain Christopher Jones, who despised them as hypocrites, liars and fools.

Had the Pilgrims been beatitudinous models of meekness, this feud could have developed into a very one-sided affair. They were not, however, the kind who submitted gracefully to insults, and would fight at the drop of an ostrich-plumed hat. When a showdown came they were ready to take on Captain Jones and his whole roughneck crew.

More than circumstance and incident are required, of course, to make a good movie. Sound drama depends primarily upon the development of individual characters who can enlist the interest and sympathy of an audience. In this respect, history bequeathed a richly colorful and varied set of characters to "Plymouth Adventure".

The *Mayflower* company was not, by any means, a tightly knit congregation of religious dissenters fleeing from persecution by King James I. Only 40 of the 102 passengers aboard were Separatists from the Church of England or, as they called themselves, "Ye Saincts".

Of the remainder, some were artisans and small shopkeepers who saw a money-making opportunity to get in on the ground floor of a new colonial economy. Others were lower class ne'er-do-wells, attracted by the prospect of being able to own land. A few—like Gilbert Winslow, who says in the story, "I want to see for myself whether it's really a new world or only the backside of the old one"— were frankly adventurers.

There were also indentured servants and hired hands, one of the latter being John Alden, a young cooper employed under a year's contract to keep the passengers' barrels of beer, water and "strong water" in good repair during the voyage and to help with house carpentering after the Pilgrims landed in "Virginia".

For that's where the Pilgrims thought they were heading—to the territory near the mouth of the Hudson River, which was part of the Virginia mapped by Captain John Smith.

They sailed from England, however, as the pawns and intended victims of a real estate swindle. Merchant underwriters of the colonial enterprise rigged a shady deal which they hoped would make them rich, sending the Pilgrims to a place north of the one originally agreed upon.

The Gebler novel passed through the milling process of M-G-M's story department, from a reader to various editors. Kenneth MacKenna, the department head, then sent it along to Dore Schary's desk with a synopsis and favorable comments.

"Here's an opportunity to tell the historically significant Pilgrim story in highly cinematic terms," Schary decided as he finished reading the book.

"It deals with high adventure, excitement and conflict—the very elements of drama. It reveals them as people with passion, fears and aggressions."

That this view of the Pilgrims directly contradicted the popular image that has grown up around them in legend, Schary was well aware. He also knew that, as subjects of film material, they ranked high on Hollywood's "untouchable" list.

While they might be towering pillars in American folklore, the Pilgrims have never enjoyed a good reputation in Hollywood. Past attempts to bring them to life on the screen were rare and fell considerably below the mark of either critical or popular success, proving the Pilgrims were difficult to deal with.

The root of the trouble was that the Founding Fathers, as known in the national *mythos*, were stereotypes of Nineteenth Century Victorianism. Actually the Pilgrims belonged to the earlier and far lustier Elizabethan Era. But they were too busy minding their own colonial affairs at Plymouth to celebrate themselves in song or story, oil paint or bronze, and it was two hundred years before the myth weavers discovered them.

From his long-deferred, posthumous portrait sitting, the typical Pilgrim emerged as an 1850 model of meekness, piety and manly virtue. He was a good and admirable man, but an unexciting one, whose movements across a film strip were jerky and puppet-like. He seemed more at home in a school's third grade Thanksgiving pageant, and that — after its unrewarding early experiences — was where Hollywood was willing to leave him.

As an ardent collector of Americana whose reading interest runs chiefly to history and biography, Schary occasionally had toyed with the notion of making a movie about the Pilgrims. None had been attempted since silent picture days. In his early career as a screen writer, Schary once considered writing the Pilgrim story as musical comedy, but gave it up in the belief that the Pilgrim Father was too dignified and sacred in American tradition to be satirized.

"The legendary concept of the Pilgrim—a stiff-collared fellow wandering through the snow with a dead turkey slung over his shoulder and a blunderbuss in his hand—is too indelibly drawn," Schary concluded.

You couldn't spoof him and you couldn't debunk him. Adult generations of American school boys who had enacted the role would not tolerate such film treatment. Neither would generations of the grown-up school girl who had tripped primly at his side through the cranberry bogs en route to the pageantic "First Thanksgiving". On the other hand, they wouldn't pay box-office dollars to see a movie which faithfully perpetuated the Pilgrim myth.

That, as Schary saw it, was the dilemma —until he read "The Plymouth Adventure". Then he perceived that the Pilgrim story could be told honestly and excitingly and, by treating events following the settlement in New England in epilogue fashion, without encroaching on the realm of accepted folklore.

"Words like courage and inspiration only take on meaning through the actions of people within the historical frame," said Schary. "This story of the Pilgrims' conflict with the captain, without betraying any of history's basic facts, offers a chance to express what it was they were seeking in America and what it was they found. It is also the story of the captain's regeneration. Man's regeneration has provided the crucible, in dramaturgical terms, for great theater ever since the time of Aeschylus."

M-G-M bought screen rights to "The Plymouth Adventure" on March 9, 1950, as the immediate result of Schary's enthusiasm. Results were to multiply enormously over the following two and a half years.

Chapter II

THE SCRIPT

ONE day while negotiations for purchase of the story were in progress, Dore Schary received a long distance telephone call from Screen Writer Helen Deutsch.

Author of "King Solomon's Mines", "Kim", "National Velvet" and numerous other film scripts, she was calling from New York and sounded excited. A friend in the publishing business had let her read galley proofs of a new novel named "The Plymouth Adventure", which she thought would make a fine picture.

"Glad you like it," Schary chuckled, "because we've decided to buy it."

Miss Deutsch, who's seldom at a loss for words, launched into a voluble "pitch" for the writing assignment. The subject matter fascinated her, and she had some definite ideas about how the screen play should be handled. Schary heard her out, smiling to himself. It's a promising sign when someone gets excited about a job to be done.

"It's yours," he told her when she paused for breath.

Schary already had decided that the picture was his, too. Despite his duties as the supervisory executive in charge of M-G-M's entire output of 44 pictures annually, he still finds time and energy to produce one or more pictures a year personally, and "Plymouth" had been earmarked as his choice for the 1952 schedule.

Off and on, with other assignments intervening, Miss Deutsch worked some twenty-one months on "Plymouth Adventure". She spent more time in research, getting acquainted with the Pilgrims, than in the actual writing of her script.

Schary and Miss Deutsch conceived the picture as a human story of love, conflict and adventure against the historical background —not as a documentary about the Pilgrims— and research was directed toward avoidance of error in painting the backdrop. By dramatizing the vitality of America's Pilgrim heritage, they felt, the story might also become a contribution to "the spiritual reaffirmation of our time."

Circumstances leading up to the *Mayflower's* voyage, such as the real estate swindle and the flight of William Brewster, Ruling Elder of the Separatist Church, with a price on his head, were rooted in historical fact. So were events surrounding the landfall at Cape Cod, signing

of the Mayflower Compact, the fate which awaited Dorothy Bradford, wife of the colony's second governor, and the decisive role Captain Jones of the *Mayflower* was to play in the Pilgrims' lives.

Knowing how the tale began and how it came out, historically, Miss Deutsch proceeded to plot a story to fit and interpret the known facts—"Inventing," she said, "only in areas where nothing is known, while blowing away some of the mythical cobwebs." Recorded history, indeed, gave her very little assistance beyond the knowledge that the *Mayflower* experienced, and barely survived, a severe storm at sea.

Major inventions of the screen play were the shipboard romance between Dorothy Bradford and Captain Jones and a diary, utilized as a story-telling device, kept by Gilbert Winslow.

Captain Jones emerged largely as a creature of the novelist's and the screen writer's invention, for the master of the *Mayflower* is one of the genuine mystery men of history. Until recent years he was widely confused with another Christopher Jones, also a British sea captain in the 1620 period, who was a pirate and a thoroughly disreputable character. The *Mayflower's* Jones was undoubtedly a rough and rugged fellow, like most seafarers of his day. Socially he was a cut above his passengers, having citizen rank, whereas most of them were yeomen. All but the vague outline of his life and career, however, has been lost in the mists of time.

No sooner were M-G-M's purchase of "The Plymouth Adventure" novel and her assignment to the picture announced than Miss Deutsch began to receive a small flood of letters from *Mayflower* descendants and other interested parties. They offered advice, suggestions and strongly worded "do's" and "dont's" concerning film treatment of the Pilgrim story. The letters revealed an amazing divergence of opinion on what their authors invariably asserted as the "truth" about the Pilgrims. Not even professional historians who offered counsel agreed in their interpretations.

On just one point were the letter-writing historians unanimous—they hoped the movie would not continue to foster the "Why don't you speak for yourself, John" legend. The Myles Standish-Priscilla Mullins-John Alden triangle was a poetic invention of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1858, and historical scholars are agreed it had no basis in fact.

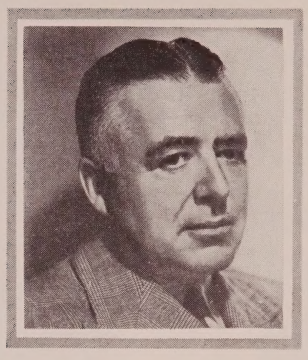
The "Plymouth Adventure" screen story stops short of the period Longfellow embroidered in "The Courtship of Myles Standish," but the picture script makes it clear that Standish was a happily married man and that his wife, Rose, was with him on the *Mayflower*.

By comparison with most historical fiction and drama, Miss Deutsch's screen play followed the recorded facts with remarkable fidelity. There were only two important departures, both in the interest of dramatic structure. Signing of the Mayflower Compact was delayed until a few days after it occurred in historical chronology, and William Bradford was permitted to be washed overboard during the storm sequence. Actually it was another passenger, a man-servant of Governor John Carver's named John Howland, who fell into the sea. Howland was not important to the plot, however, so Producer Schary authorized the writer to exercise her literary license by ascribing this mishap to Bradford, whose rescue by the captain would have greater significance.

How did the characters—in this instance, the Pilgrims—talk? That is always the dramatist's knotty problem when the story deals with past ages. Letters and other records left by the Pilgrims themselves were of little help, for people almost never write as they speak. Poetry of the era was written in a stylized literary language of its own.

Miss Deutsch found the best clues to their vernacular through careful study of Elizabethan prose dramas. Much of the authentic idiom, once established, had to be discarded as archaically incomprehensible to a modern audience and as "unsuitably blue" in flavor and vocabulary. Fewer than half the Pilgrims were "saints," after all, and none of the Mayflower's 33 crew men belonged in that category. Also, paradoxically, certain words like "welded" and "pioneer" and "pneumonia," which actually had some currency in Elizabethan English, would have an implausible ring of modernity in the picture.

The language of the finished script proved to be a composite, one part derived from the Pilgrims' own speech patterns, and two parts the undated, lyrical composition of the screen writer.



Chapter III

THE DIRECTOR

IN the spring of 1951 a first draft of the script was in hand and Schary's initial enthusiasm for the project was shared by Clarence Brown, whom he had asked to direct the picture, and by studio department heads who had seen the blue-covered, incomplete screen play.

"It's the freshness of subject matter in this very human story—about the Pilgrims, of all people — that appeals to me," said Brown. "Here we have the true frontiersmen of American history, red-blooded men and women with temperaments, foibles and, above all, courage. All the romantic fiction written about them by imaginative poets is just that — fiction. Herded between decks of a small ship for 66 days during rough weather, they weren't the kind to complain about cramped quarters, the lack of hot meals and other discomforts. Their main gripe was that they ran out of beer."

Enthusiasm for the picture didn't kindle quite so quickly in the production department. It never does. Not that the production planners and cost estimators are professionally committed to the dim view, but they are the manufacturers and realists of the movie business. Others may write and approve scripts calling for a billowing pink cloud big enough to support a chorus line, but Vice-President J. J. Cohn and Production Manager Walter Strohm are the men who calculate how much the cloud is going to cost and offer sage advice on whether the cloud will be worth it in the finished film. Over recent years M-G-M's cost estimators, by reading advance scripts, have operated within a three per cent margin of error in predicting the ultimate cost of future productions.

It was obvious that "Plymouth Adventure" would be expensive to make. Just to start with, a full-scale replica of the *Mayflower* would have to be built. Months of time would be consumed by research, design and construction on the shipbuilding phase alone.

The production department foretold with uncanny accuracy that set design and construction on "Plymouth" would account for 13 per cent of the picture's total cost, as compared with 7½ per cent for that item in the average picture; that all pre-production costs would represent 18.7 per cent of the final cost, compared with an average of 15 per cent; and that the wages of camera and sound crews, grips, electricians and other members of the production staff would take 21.8 per cent of the budget, against the average picture's 14.8 per cent.

Physically, Producer Schary foresaw that "Plymouth" would be the most difficult production undertaken in his years at M-G-M. The production department concurred, pointing out that the original *Mayflower* was so crowded with 135 passengers and crew aboard that there would scarcely have been deck space for a home movie hobbyist to manipulate an 8-mm. camera—much less the bulky 35-mm. Technicolor equipment and photographic staff.

Every shot made above or below deck would have to be charted and angled down to fractional inches, for M-G-M's *Mayflower* duplicated the original ship's dimensions. The greatest skill and ingenuity of direction and camera work were called for, if pace, action and dramatic effect were to be sustained during approximately 90 minutes of playing time on the screen.

With costs due to multiply at a minimum rate of $18,000 per day while shooting was in progress, Schary felt that veteran Director Clarence Brown was the man best qualified to lick the complex production problems and bring the picture to completion on a reasonable, economical schedule.

The production department began to breathe easier, counting most of the project's technical aspects solved in advance, when it became evident that Brown was just as eager to direct the picture as Schary was to have him direct it.

Educated as an electrical and mechanical engineer, Brown's grasp and mastery of the technological aspects of picture making have served him well during his three-decade career in Hollywood. His long and impressive list of directorial credits includes such film classics as "Anna Christie", "A Free Soul", "The Rains Came", "National Velvet", "The Yearling" and "Intruder in the Dust".

Assigned as chief cameraman on "Plymouth Adventure" was William Daniels, winner of the Academy Award for cinematography in 1948 with "The Naked City". Brown and Daniels had collaborated often — since the days when one directed and the other photographed Greta Garbo's pictures for M-G-M.

From the outset Schary had visualized the *Mayflower's* Captain Christopher Jones as a great starring role for Spencer Tracy. Director Brown, after one reading of the advance script, made the same nomination. Both men felt that Van Johnson was a natural for the part of John Alden.

Beyond that point, casting could wait. First it was necessary to "mount the production." Signalizing the start of many months of detailed research, planning, design and construction by all departments of the studio, the production department opened account books on "Plymouth Adventure" on June 18, 1951, and assigned it a number in the 28-year chain of pictures which have rolled out from M-G-M Studios—Production No. 1552.

Chapter IV

MOUNTING PRODUCTION—THE SHIP

RESEARCH is one of the most fascinating of human occupations. The job of reconstructing the *Mayflower*, of re-creating the architecture, clothing, tools, utensils and artifacts of Pilgrim days became—for all associated with the project—an adventure in rediscovery of American historical origins.

Even before a production number was assigned, the studio's research department became the clearing house for detailed points of information concerning the period and the people, answering hundreds of widely varied questions such as "Was the jew's-harp in general use in 1620?" and "Were sailors on the *Mayflower* tattooed?" (The answers: "Yes" and "No").

The spadework of fact-excavation began in Cedric Gibbons' art department. Seven-time winner of the Academy "Oscar" for his art direction, Gibbons is the master planner, designer and engineer in charge of translating such script directions as "Interior, an English waterfront tavern of the era" into visual, dimensional reality.

Urie McCleary, associate art director whom he appointed to direct supervision of "Plymouth Adventure" planning, found old almanacs a reliable source of data on tide and moon tables and general weather conditions under which the *Mayflower* sailed, but ship architecture was a blank page in contemporary records of the 1620 period.

It was not until 1629 that the British Admiralty, through a newly organized naval commission, first began requiring shipbuilders to submit blueprints, sketches and scale models of new vessels. Thus all the "authentic" models of the *Mayflower* to be found in museums and private collections—and there are scores of them throughout the United States —represent little more than the model builder's guess, informed or uninformed and made many generations later, about how the ship looked.

Very little is known concerning the *Mayflower* except that she had been decorated as one of the British merchantmen which helped defeat the Spanish Armada (indicating she had been built sometime prior to 1588), that she once hauled fish, lumber and tar from Norway to England, and had been engaged in the Mediterranean wine trade for several years preceding her charter voyage with the Pilgrims.

Although the South of England is cluttered with taverns displaying assorted planks and fittings as "relics of the *Mayflower*"—enough timber to account for several wrecked ships—there is no record of the ship's eventual fate. After her historic Atlantic crossing of 1620 she simply drifted out of sight and mind.

Leading historians and marine architects are generally agreed that the *Mayflower* had an over-all length of 90 feet and a broad 24-foot beam, was of approximately 180 tons and probably lateen-rigged on her mizzenmast, being otherwise square-rigged. She was steered by means of a vertical "whipstaff" connected below deck to the tiller, the ship's wheel not having been invented until several years later.

That was the ship the art department designed—"a chunky little tramp ship of her day," as McCleary termed her—unquestionably the closest thing to the real *Mayflower* ever built.

Using 16th Century tools and hand-made bolts of wood and iron, construction of the

original *Mayflower* must have taken at least a year, McCleary estimated. The boys on M-G-M's back lot built theirs in about half that time, complete up to the spars, 4,200 square feet of canvas and 2,000 fathoms of rope in her rigging.

As seen on the screen, the *Mayflower* will carry no name on her hull. The custom of identifying a merchant ship by name and home port originated much later. In Pilgrim times a ship was more frequently known by her master's name, as "Captain Jones' ship." An interesting sidelight disclosed by McCleary's research was that William Bradford's historically famous journal entitled "Of Plimoth Plantation" never mentioned the *Mayflower* by name until an entry written in 1630. In all earlier references to the vessel, Bradford called it simply "the ship."

While the *Mayflower* was the main set involved in the picture, McCleary also encountered a problem in designing the original Plymouth settlement, which appears in the film's closing sequences.

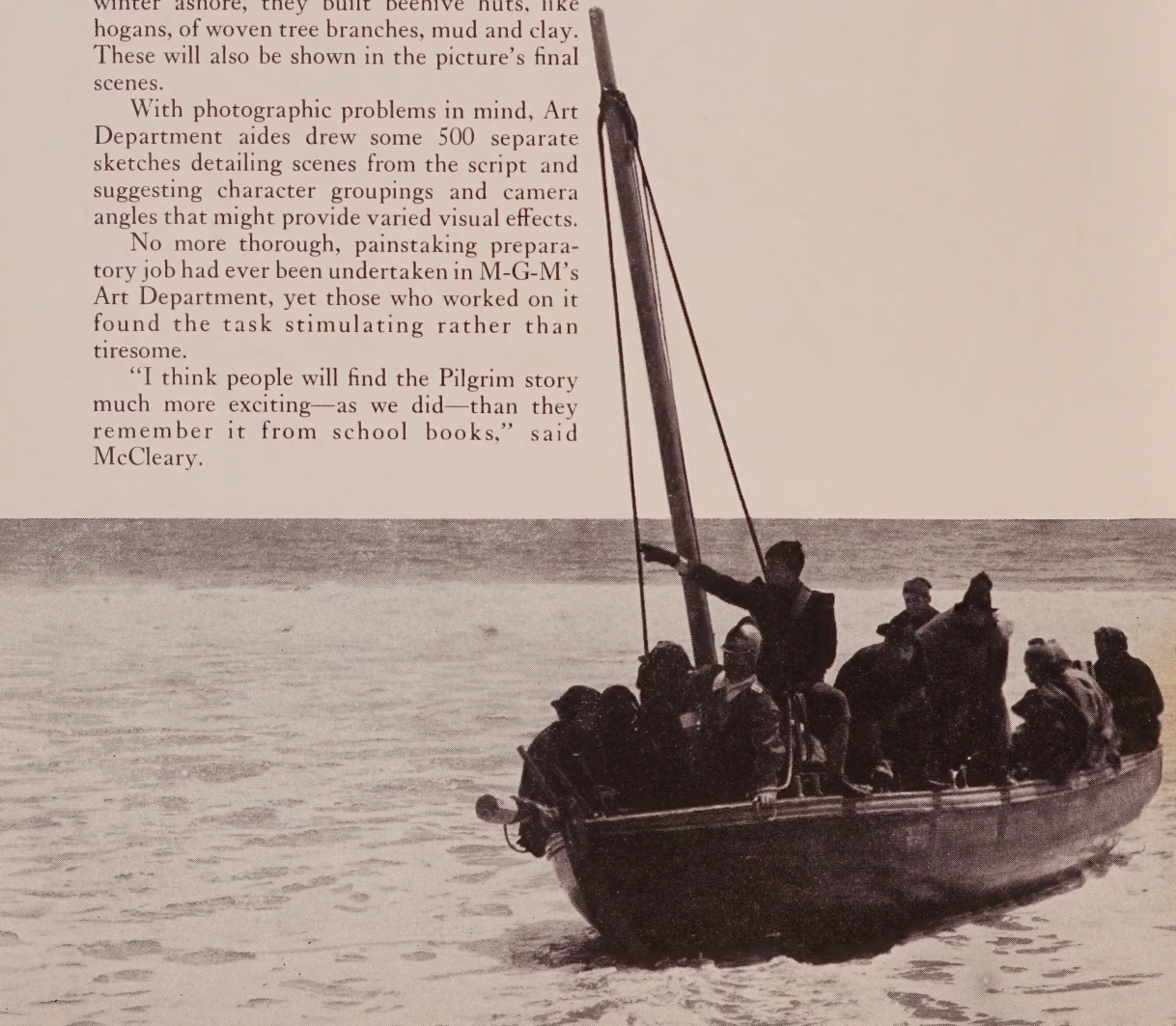
The Pilgrims didn't build or live in log cabins, although many artists have painted them as doing so because of inadequate research. McCleary found his first clue to appearance of the Pilgrims' houses in an historical notation that the dwellings frequently caught fire in their thatched roofs. Further research proved they built cottages very much like the ones they had formerly occupied in rural England, with walls of thick vertical planks, planked floors and wood-frame chimneys of wattle and daub construction.

For temporary shelter during their first winter ashore, they built beehive huts, like hogans, of woven tree branches, mud and clay. These will also be shown in the picture's final scenes.

With photographic problems in mind, Art Department aides drew some 500 separate sketches detailing scenes from the script and suggesting character groupings and camera angles that might provide varied visual effects.

No more thorough, painstaking preparatory job had ever been undertaken in M-G-M's Art Department, yet those who worked on it found the task stimulating rather than tiresome.

"I think people will find the Pilgrim story much more exciting—as we did—than they remember it from school books," said McCleary.



Chapter V

MOUNTING PRODUCTION—THE PASSENGERS

THE commonly held notion that the Pilgrims were a thoroughly somber, colorless group, both in dress and manner, was quickly exploded by M-G-M's wardrobe Department.

"Thanksgiving cards and children's history books have spread the impression that the Pilgrims all looked alike — the men, for example, all wearing drab gray clothes and stiff hats. It seemed as though some pre-Seventh Avenue clothier had turned out their suits by the thousands," said Walter Plunkett, Academy Award-winning designer assigned to the production by Department Head Sam Kress.

"Actually it was a period when people liked color. The Pilgrims had no austerity rules regarding dress, but they've somehow been confused with Puritans or Quakers. Pilgrim women dipped their materials in saffron to get a bright orange color, or in indigo for rich blue shades."

Stylewise, Plunkett found, 1620 had been an "in-between" period for women. Earlier, during Queen Elizabeth's reign, the English had been extremely fashion conscious. Later,

when Charles I ascended the throne in 1625, his court brought a renewed interest in high fashion.

At the time the Pilgrims left England, women of all classes wore fairly low necklines —frequently with an unrelated collar, choker-fashion, around the neck—and dressed in velvets and handsome satins if they could afford them (which few Pilgrim women could).

Some women aboard the *Mayflower* had lived in Holland several years as religious refugees, and Dutch fashion was reflected in their caps and sleeves. Dorothy Bradford, lately of Leyden and Amsterdam, would have worn a cap tied under her chin and full, rather elaborately trimmed sleeves. But 18-year-old Priscilla Mullins, from Surrey, would pin her cap in her hair and wear split sleeves.

Like most men of England's lower classes, the Pilgrim Fathers inclined toward Lincoln green or russet brown in their everyday garb. For somewhat dressier occasions they chose a variety of colors. Ruling Elder William Brewster, for example, took along a wardrobe which included a red cap, a violet coat and a pair of green drawers.

Captain Myles Standish was the easiest character for Plunkett to costume, for painters of the period paid flattering attention to military men and their armored uniforms. But naval uniforms had not yet come into use. Sailors wore ragged canvas pants or leather breeches.

The *Mayflower's* Captain Jones wore no mark of rank, going to sea in the same clothes he wore ashore. He would be distinguished from the crew, Plunkett concluded, only because his clothes were of better quality and he had more of them.

"It might be noticed that none of the Pilgrims wears gloves," Plunkett pointed out to Director Brown. "Gloves were a great luxury in those days. It was a state occasion when somebody like the Spanish Ambassador presented a pair to Queen Elizabeth.

"The same was true of nightgowns. Only royalty or extremely wealthy people had ever seen them. So when Dorothy Bradford got up in the middle of the night to visit the captain's cabin, she wouldn't be wearing a nightgown. She'd have on a simple cotton or muslin shift —for, like everyone else aboard, she slept in her underwear."

The *Mayflower* had never been intended for service as a passenger carrier. The 102 Pilgrims enjoyed no comforts and very little privacy, being jampacked into a 'tween-decks hold less than 90 feet long, 22 feet wide and only 6 feet high.

Re-creating those squalidly cramped living quarters, complete with sleeping hammocks, ship gear and all the clutter of luggage and paraphernalia the Pilgrims took with them on the voyage, was the task of Set Decorators Edwin B. Willis and Hugh Hunt and Prop Man Harry Edwards.

The ship's galley was very small, not equipped to prepare food for anybody except captain and crew. The Pilgrims had brought along their own supplies. The list compiled from research by Prop Man Edwards showed such items as brown flour and oatmeal; oil,

vinegar, butter and cheese; dried peas, prunes and raisins; bacon, salt pork, dried beef and fish; turnips, cabbage, onions and parsnips; sugar, spices and jellies; brandy and juice of lemon; drinking water and beer—more of the latter than water.

All these were stored in the cargo hold in round, big-bellied casks of various sizes and in oddly oval-shaped hogsheads, some bound with split willow saplings instead of iron hoops. Duplicating these casks brought up difficulties which must have plagued John Alden and other coopers of 1620, and perhaps led eventually to the more streamlined modern design, for Hugh Hunt's custom-made casks kept bursting apart under the abnormal belly pressure.

The Pilgrims cooked their own meals, building fires in sand pits on the lower deck and suspending their pots and pans from overhead beams. The cooking vessels swayed with the ship's motion, which made cooking a slow and sloppy business during rough weather. The basic meal was a stew, soup or porridge. Each person roasted his own meat, holding it over the fire on a two-pronged fork with a handle three feet or more in length. Those were the only forks aboard. The Pilgrims ate with spoons, pocket knives and fingers from plates, mugs and bowls made of wood or pewter.

No trouble or expense was spared to achieve realism on the *Mayflower*. Astrolabes, compasses and other navigation instruments, speaking trumpets, water clocks, matchlock guns that would really fire, deck cannon, hand-stitched sails and canvas hammocks, the main screw of a printing press — all of authentic 1620 design—were made to set decorator's and prop man's order in studio shops, forge and foundry.

With exception of the near-at-hand Pacific Ocean, which effectively "doubled" for the Atlantic, no substitutes were permitted in fitting the M-G-M *Mayflower* for her motion picture adventure. Even the anchor hawser in the cargo hold was real, 750 feet of double-strand, hand-layed Manila hemp, nine inches in circumference and weighing 3,300 pounds. It had to be coiled clockwise to avert kinking and moving it was a major operation. It would have to be moved frequently during the picture's shooting to make camera room—and the crew would learn to damn it in pure Elizabethan billingsgate.

Chapter VI

THE CAST

CHOOSING the actors for a picture is more complicated than just finding people who look right for individual roles. Names of suggested players, their availability, temperaments and results of their screen tests all become matters of consultation among the producer, the director and M-G-M's Casting Department headed by Billy Grady.

To Mel Ballerino, associate casting director assigned to "Plymouth Adventure", the process is like "mixing a salad." The final balance and flavor—getting a proper mixture of facial types, colorations, physical shapes and sizes—are a major consideration.

In most films there is a certain amount of turnover in characters. Some drop out of the story and others enter it. But "Plymouth" presented a peculiar problem.

Never before had such a large cast been confined to a single small set, the *Mayflower*, for almost the entire length of a picture. Each had to be a distinct personality in looks and voice. Director Brown could not run the risk of audience confusion by casting any two actors who looked or talked alike.

Spencer Tracy, as Captain Jones, and Van Johnson, as John Alden, were original choices for the cast. Starting to toss the salad together around them, Producer Schary and Brown selected the following:

Gene Tierney for the feminine starring role of Dorothy Bradford; Leo Genn, the unforgettable Petronius of "Quo Vadis", as William Bradford; Dawn Addams, young British-born actress, as Priscilla Mullins; and Barry Jones, noted London stage and screen actor, as William Brewster.

Building outward from that nucleus, it was Ballerino's assignment to find, for Schary's and Brown's approval, the remainder of the huge total cast.* In view of its size and the "no look-alikes" rule, this job became increasingly difficult as it progressed.

History furnished few hints on what the Pilgrims really looked like. Portraits were a vanity indulged only by the English aristocracy in 1620. Only one of the Pilgrim Fathers, Edward Winslow, ever had his likeness painted, and that was some thirty years after the voyage.

Surviving records of the Plymouth Colony indicated that John Alden was blond, tall and husky (like Van Johnson), and that Myles Standish was called "Captaine Shrimpe" because he was short, florid in complexion and red-haired. Noel Drayton, London stage star, was chosen for that part. Appropriateness of the casting was proved when Drayton, wearing his pointed red beard, stopped a few days in Boston en route to California.

"When did you come down off your pedestal?" several Bostonians asked him. Drayton was mystified by the joke until someone explained he was the living image of Myles Standish, as immortalized by a statue at near-by Duxbury.

The role of Gilbert Winslow, whose diary serves as a narrative device, was especially difficult to fill. Dozens of auditions were held in search of a voice, understandable and pleasant and not too broadly British, to carry the burden of narration. The choice finally fell on John Dehner, well-known radio actor who gained prominence as a commentator at the 1945 United Nations Conference in San Francisco.

Ballerino's experience in London as the casting director of "Quo Vadis" (he was known as "Mr. Quo Vadis" there) was of value to "Plymouth Adventure". Since the Pilgrims were English, a liberal sprinkling of English types and accents was desired in the cast, and Ballerino knew more British and British-born American actors than anybody in Hollywood.

In addition to Leo Genn, Dawn Addams, Barry Jones and Noel Drayton, other Londoners selected for "Plymouth" included Rhys Williams as Weston, the scheming real estate promoter; Margaret Mc Grath, a Southampton tavern maid; Murray Matheson, Hugh Pryse, Keith McConnell, John Sherman and Paul Cavanagh as other prominent Pilgrims.

Picking the *Mayflower's* crew took on some of the aspects of a "Mr. America" contest. The sailors had to be actors and they also had to be stunt men, capable of performing athletic chores on deck and aloft.

The final selection was made on a bare stage, with Ballerino parading a long line of giant-like applicants—stripped to the waist, all flexing their biceps, pectorals and back muscles—before the critical gaze of Schary and Brown.

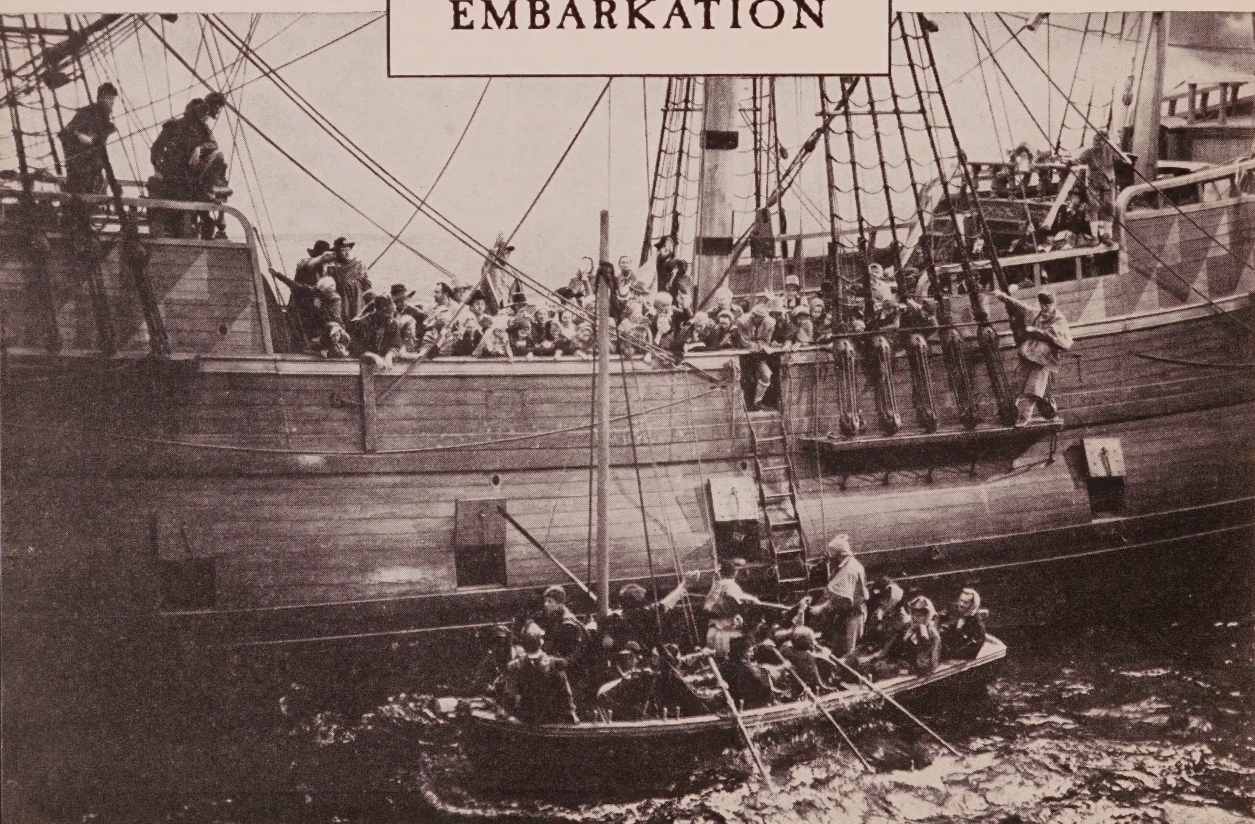
One of the last to be cast was Lloyd Bridges in the role of Coppin, villainous mate of the ship. In the script, Coppin had to be brawny enough to fight a draw with Van Johnson, yet not too tough for Spencer Tracy to knock cold in a climactic scene.

Finally the cast was complete. They would be working together in close quarters almost as long as the original Pilgrims had been cooped aboard the *Mayflower*. High-salaried actors accustomed to the kid glove star treatment would find themselves playing atmospheric background, in many scenes, for bit players. Unmentioned in the tests and interviews, that fact had been kept in mind all along by the director and casting office. Their final cast, they believed, was made up of people who could "take it" almost as well as the Pilgrims they would portray.

* *The complete cast is listed in the Appendix* (*Pages 26-28*).

Chapter VII

EMBARKATION



AT 9 o'clock in the morning on March 24, 1952, M-G-M's *Mayflower* was ready to sail.

The studio's make-up artists had been busy since 5 a.m. under William J. Tuttle's supervision, preparing scores of Pilgrim and sailor characters for their scenes. They referred constantly to a unique 18-page mimeographed book of charts prepared by Assistant Director Reggie Callow for make-up and wardrobe guidance. (By scene number, the charts followed every player through every stage of the voyage—"neat and clean" at sailing time, "slightly dirty" after a few days at sea, "pale, showing signs of scurvy" a month later, and so on.)

The technical adviser, an old sailing ship master named Captain A. C. Wilvers, who had sailed the last four-masted bark to put out from West Coast ports many years before, went on deck to check the handling of sails and rigging.

Two small dogs—cast as pets the Pilgrims took aboard with them in 1620—strained at the leashes held by Rudd Weatherwax, famous Lassie's trainer.

Composers Miklos Rozsa and Bronislau Kaper stood at dockside, absorbing color and mood for the background musical score to be written later. Already in the latter's pocket was the manuscript of a duet song for Spencer Tracy and Margaret McGrath—"Words by William Shakespeare from 'As You Like It'; Music by B. Kaper".

Outwardly calm and nonchalant, Producer Schary listened with approving interest to Cameraman Daniels' explanation of his color and lighting scheme. As the *Mayflower* moved across the screen from East to West, progressing farther from the Pilgrims' old homes toward New England in winter, the Technicolor effect would be increasingly colder in monochromatic blue-green-grays of sea and sky.

The long months of research, writing, planning and construction were over. Producer Schary called the entire company of Pilgrims, *Mayflower* crew and production crew together at the ship's rail.

"We are embarking on a very ambitious adventure in picture making," he said. "It would be presumptuous to compare what we are doing with the adventure undertaken by the Pilgrims in 1620—but all of us know the importance of this picture. Beyond making an economical and a successful picture, we hope it will also be a contribution to the American idea and to human decency." He turned to Director Brown.

"It's all yours now, Clarence," he added.

Both men knew the value of all preparations could be realized only if the players, their actions and lines made the *Mayflower's* Pilgrims come to life in simple, human terms for the American and worldwide audience.

Brown took his place alongside the camera and called for a take on Scene 28—Medium Shot, Day, *Mayflower* at Anchor, Southampton, Pilgrims Going Aboard.

"The Pilgrims don't belong to just a few thousand *Mayflower* descendants. They're the spiritual forefathers of all Americans, all the millions who followed them from Europe and other parts of the world, right down to and including the Displaced Persons of World War II," Brown said quietly. "That's what we're trying to get across here—these Pilgrims were our first steerage-class immigrants."

Lights flicked on. A buzzer sounded. The camera started turning and a chalk-board snapped shut. The film chronicle of "Plymouth Adventure" had begun.

APPENDIX

PASSENGER LIST OF THE MAYFLOWER

Out of Plymouth, England—September 6, 1620

Christopher Jones, Master ..... *SPENCER TRACY*
Coppin, Mate ..... *LLOYD BRIDGES*
Clarke, Mate ..... *Damian O'Flynn*
Duff, Mate ..... *Owen McGiveney*
Greene ..... *John Dierkes*
Salterne ..... *John Alderson*
Helmsman ..... *Gil Perkins*
Crew of 33 ..... *William Self*, *Charles Keane*, *Stunt Men*, *Extra Players*

PASSENGERS

(*Asterisk (*) indicates those who died of the General Sickness at New Plymouth, 1620-1621.*)

John Alden— Aged 21; cooper-carpenter hired by colonists for term of one year; stayed in New England, married Priscilla Mullins (*below*); nine children; died in 1687 ..... *VAN JOHNSON*

Isaac Allerton— Aged 34; London tailor; became "first Yankee trader"; married three times; died in 1659 ..... *Arthur Tovey*

Mrs. Mary Allerton— His first wife, aged 32; died 1621* ..... *Joy Rogers*

Remember Allerton— Their daughter, 6; died in 1655 ..... *Patsy Henry*

John Billington— Aged 30; hanged for murder of another colonist in 1630 ..... *John Sherman*

Mrs. Ellen Billington— His wife, 28 ..... *Beatrice Gray*

William Bradford— Aged 31; second Governor of Colony, writer of its early history; married twice; died in 1657 ..... *LEO GENN*

Mrs. Dorothy Bradford— His first wife; aged 23, died of drowning off Cape Cod, 1620 ..... *GENE TIERNEY*

William Brewster — Aged 54; Ruling Elder of Pilgrim congregation; "wanted" by Church and Crown authorities in England; died in 1643 ..... *BARRY JONES*

Mrs. Mary Brewster— His wife, aged 52; died in 1627 ..... *Kathleen Lockhart*

Love Brewster— Their son, 9; died in 1650 ..... *Owen Pritchard*

Wrastle (Wrestling) Brewster—Their son, 6; died in 1635 ..... *Jeffrey Pritchard*

William Button (Butten)—Samuel Fuller's servant boy; died before land was sighted, 1620 ..... *Tommy Ivo*

John Carver— Aged 54; merchant; first Governor of Colony; died in 1621* ..... *Paul Cavanagh*

Mrs. Catherine Carver— His wife, aged 40; died in 1621* ..... *Kay English*

Francis Cooke— Aged 43; wool comber; died in 1633 ..... *Gordon Armitage*

Humility Cooper— Young cousin of Edward Tilley family, aged 8; later sent back to England ..... *Robin Alexander*

Francis Eaton—	Aged 25; carpenter-shipwright; married three times; died in 1633.....*Sig Frolich*
Mrs. Sarah Eaton—	His first wife; aged 30; died 1621*.....*Katherine Doyle*
..... Ellis—	Sailor hired by colonists; returned to England.....*Patrick Whyte*
Samuel Fuller—	Aged 35; deacon; married twice; died in 1633.....*Hugh Pryse*
Stephen Hopkins—	Aged 35; later Assistant Governor; married twice; nine children; died in 1644.....*Don Dilloway*
Mrs. Eliz. Hopkins—	His second wife; gave birth to son, christened Oceanus, at sea aboard *Mayflower;* died in 1640.....*Elizabeth Harrower*
Damaris Hopkins—	Their young son; died in 1627.....*Kenneth Osmond*
Giles Hopkins—	Stephen Hopkins' son by former marriage; died in 1690.....*Dayton Osmond*
Constance Hopkins—	Stephen Hopkins' daughter by former marriage; died in 1677.....*Jessica Vicars*
John Howland—	Aged 28; John Carver's servant; married Elizabeth Tilley (*below*); nine children; died in 1672.....*Joe Kaye*
Christopher Martin—	Aged 45; first treasurer of Pilgrim colonists; died in 1621*.....*Murray Matheson*
Mrs. ..... Martin—	His wife; died in 1621*.....*June Cavendish*
Desire Minter—	Aged 20; companion of Mrs. Carver; returned to England.....*Mary Murphy*
Ellen Moore (More)—	One of family of orphaned London children, attached to Winslow family as servant girl; died 1621*.....*Noreen Corcoran*
William Mullins—	Aged 40; shopkeeper; died in 1621*.....*Matt Moore*
Mrs. Alice Mullins—	His wife; died in 1621*.....*Ivis Goulding*
Priscilla Mullins—	Their daughter, 18; married John Alden (*above*); died in 1685.....*DAWN ADDAMS*
Joseph Mullins—	Their son, 6; died in 1621*.....*Roger Broadus*
Thomas Rogers—	Merchant; died in 1621*.....*Kenneth Dumaine*
Joseph Rogers—	His son, 12; died in 1678.....*David Sober*
Capt. Myles Standish—	Aged 36; professional soldier; only Pilgrim leader who never joined the church; married twice; five children; died in 1656.....*Noel Drayton*
Mrs. Rose Standish—	His first wife; died in 1621*.....*Elizabeth Flournoy*
John Tilley—	Silk worker; died in 1621*.....*Jack Harris*
Mrs. Eliz. Tilley—	His wife; died in 1621*.....*Stephanie Insul*
Elizabeth Tilley—	Their daughter; later married John Howland (*above*); died 1687.....*Brenda Pedin*
William Trevore—	Sailor hired by colonists; later returned to England.....*James Logan*
Richard Warren—	Aged 40; merchant; died in 1628.....*Walter Coughlin*
William White—	Aged 28; wool carder; died in 1621*.....*Keith McConnell*
Mrs. Susanna White—	His wife, aged 26; later became second wife of Edward Winslow; died in 1680.....*Betty Graeff*
Edward Winslow—	Aged 25; printer; later Governor of Colony; many descendants; died in 1655.....*Lowell Gilmore*
Mrs. Eliz. Winslow—	His first wife; aged 23; died in 1621*.....*Betty Sanford*
Gilbert Winslow—	Aged 20; brother of Edward Winslow; later returned to England.....*John Dehner*

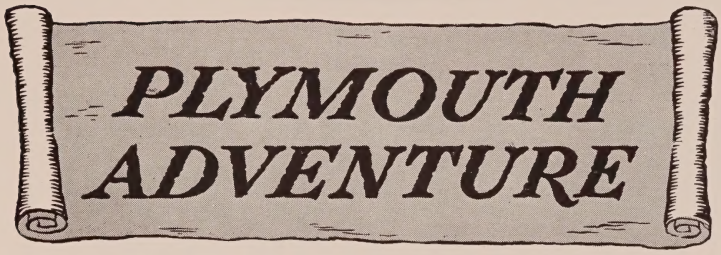
(The following Mayflower passengers, also appearing in the picture, are portrayed by extra players).

Bartholomew Allerton—	Isaac Allerton's son, 8; later returned to England.
Mary Allerton—	His sister, 4; last survivor of *Mayflower* company; died in 1699.
John Allerton—	Mariner hired by colonists; died in 1621*.
Francis Billington—	John Billington's son, 8.
John Billington—	His brother, 6.
Richard Britteridge—	Died in 1620*.
Peter Browne—	Aged 20; married twice, five children; died in 1633.
Robert Carter—	Servant of Mullins family; died in 1621*.
James Chilton—	Aged 57; tailor; died in 1620*.
Mrs. ..... Chilton—	His wife, died in 1621*.
Mary Chilton—	Their daughter, 15; died in 1679.
Richard Clarke—	Died in 1621*.
John Cooke—	Francis Cooke's son, 8; died in 1695.
John Crackston—	Died in 1621*.
John Crackston, Jr.—	His son; died in 1628.
Edward Dotey—	Servant of Hopkins family; died in 1655.
Samuel Eaton—	Francis Eaton's infant son.

Thomas English—	Mariner hired by colonists; died in 1621*.
Moses Fletcher—	Died in 1621*.
Edward Fuller—	Died in 1621*.
Mrs. Ann Fuller—	His wife; died in 1621*.
Samuel Fuller—	Their son, 4; died in 1683.
Richard Gardiner—	Died in 1621*.
John Goodman—	Aged 25; linen weaver; owner of two dogs aboard ship; died in 1621*.
William Holbeck—	Servant of White family; died in 1621*.
John Hooke—	Servant of Allerton family; died in 1621*.
John Langemore—	Christopher Martin's servant; died in 1620*.
William Latham—	John Carver's servant boy; later returned to England.
Edward Leister—	Aged 20; servant of Hopkins family; later removed to Virginia.
Edmund Margeson—	Died in 1621*.
Jasper Moore (More)—	Orphaned London waif, attached to Carver family as servant boy; died in 1621*.
Richard Moore (More)—	Another of orphan family, William Brewster's servant; died in 1684.
.....Moore (More)—	Another of family, Brewster's servant; died in 1621*.
Degory Priest—	Aged 40; hatter; died in 1621*.
Solomon Prower—	Stepson of Christopher Martin; died in 1620*.
John Rigdale	Died in 1621*.
Mrs. Alice Rigdale—	His wife; died in 1621*.
Henry Samson—	Young cousin of Edward Tilley family; died in 1684.
George Soule—	Aged 20; servant of Edward Winslow; died in 1680.
Elias Story—	Servant of Edward Winslow; died in 1621*.
Edward Thompson—	Servant of White family; died in 1620*.
Edward Tilley—	Cloth maker; died in 1621*.
Mrs. Anne Tilley—	His wife; died in 1621*.
Thomas Tinker—	Wood sawyer; died in 1621*.
Mrs. ..... Tinker—	His wife; died in 1621*.
..... Tinker—	Their son; died in 1621*.
John Turner—	Merchant; died in 1621*.
..... Turner—	His son; died in 1621*.
..... Turner—	Another son; died in 1621*.
Resolved White—	William White's son, 5; died in 1680.
Roger Wilder—	Servant of John Carver; died in 1621*.
Thomas Williams—	Died in 1621*.
.....—	Mrs. Catherine Carver's maid-servant; died in 1621*.

The Main Title Credits

M-G-M
presents



Starring

SPENCER TRACY
GENE TIERNEY
VAN JOHNSON
LEO GENN

With

DAWN ADDAMS
LLOYD BRIDGES — BARRY JONES
JOHN DEHNER — TOMMY IVO
LOWELL GILMORE — NOEL DRAYTON

Screen Play by
HELEN DEUTSCH

From the Novel by
ERNEST GEBLER

Music by
MIKLOS ROZSA

Color by
TECHNICOLOR

Director of Photography . WILLIAM DANIELS, A.S.C.
Technicolor Color Consultant . . . . . HENRI JAFFA
Art Directors . . . . . CEDRIC GIBBONS, URIE McCLEARY
Film Editor . . . . . ROBERT J. KERN, A.C.E.
Second-Unit Direction . . . . . JAMES HAVENS
Assistant Director . . . . . RIDGEWAY CALLOW
Recording Supervisor . . . . . DOUGLAS SHEARER
Set Decorations . . . . . EDWIN B. WILLIS, HUGH HUNT
Special Effects . . . . . A. ARNOLD GILLESPIE, WARREN NEWCOMBE, IRVING G. RIES, A.S.C.
Costumes Designed by . . . . . WALTER PLUNKETT
Color Consultant . . . . . ALVORD EISEMAN
Hair Styles by . . . . . SYDNEY GUILAROFF
Make-Up Created by . . . . . WILLIAM TUTTLE

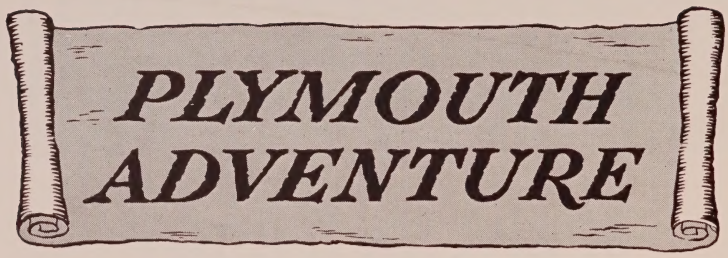
Produced by
DORE SCHARY

Directed by
CLARENCE BROWN

★

The Billing

M-G-M
presents



Starring

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With
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LLOYD BRIDGES • BARRY JONES

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A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture

★

Printed in U.S.A.

Plymouth Adventure: 1-15-17
Audio-Visual Aids Section

THE SIGNING OF THE FAMOUS MAYFLOWER COMPACT

"PLYMOUTH ADVEN[illegible]" THANKSGIVING DAY

LOEW'S STATE ★ **EGYPTIAN**

DOWNTOWN **HOLLYWOOD**